



C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER  
GOVERNOR

## NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Jon Hanian

(208) 334-2100

### **GOVERNOR HAILS WATER LEGISLATION SUCCESSES**

(BOISE) – Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter praised the Idaho Legislature for approving two measures he signed into law today aimed at ensuring Idaho's citizens, communities and businesses have a safe, clean and well-managed water supply for many years to come.

One bill provides \$15 million for water supply improvement projects throughout Idaho, and the other begins a seven-year process of the State taking over primary responsibility (primacy) from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for protecting Idaho's water quality under the federal Clean Water Act. Both were unanimously passed by the Idaho House and Idaho Senate.

"As I told legislators in my State of the State address, actively managing our precious water resources represents a critical investment in our capacity for responsible future growth," Governor Otter said. "I appreciate their attention, understanding and agreement. More importantly, the people of Idaho will be well-served by these actions to protect the resource upon which our livelihoods and way of life so directly depend."

House Bill 479 reflects the Governor's request for funding to more actively and effectively manage surface and underground water sources throughout Idaho. Effective with his signature, it provides:

- \$4 million to develop additional managed recharge capacity needed to reach Comprehensive Aquifer Management Plan goals for the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer
- \$4 million to acquire senior priority Snake River water rights to supply Mountain Home Air Force Base
- \$2.5 million to pursue enlargement of Island Park Reservoir
- \$2 million for environmental approvals and land exchange analysis of the Galloway Reservoir project in southwestern Idaho
- \$1.5 million to complete a feasibility study and environmental study on enlarging Arrowrock Reservoir on the Boise River
- \$500,000 to develop computer infrastructure need for the water supply bank
- \$500,000 to conduct joint water need studies in coordination with the northern Idaho communities to ensure water availability for future economic development.

House Bill 406, brought to the Legislature by the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, begins moving permitting and enforcement of water quality rules under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) in Idaho from the EPA to Idaho's Department of Environmental Quality.

Idaho is one of only four states without primacy over its NPDES programs, along with Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New Mexico.

There are over 900 NPDES permits issued throughout Idaho, including about 135 for cities, 81 for industries, 94 for aquaculture, 590 for storm-water systems, and four for such operations as confined animal feeding operations and suction dredging. Most permits are good for five years, but there is a long backlog of expired permits awaiting EPA action, and a number of Idaho entities continue to operate with expired NPDES permits.

“No federal agency has a greater interest in ensuring that our water is clean and safe than do Idaho citizens. I trust our own DEQ over the EPA, hands down. Besides being more directly accountable to us, DEQ has the expertise and on-the-ground knowledge to provide meaningful local control and more commonsense flexibility in writing and issuing permits, conducting annual inspections, managing the data and maintaining compliance and enforcement,” Governor Otter said. “Getting this work done right and in a timely manner is important to accelerating our economic growth. We’ll all be better off if we do it ourselves.”

A companion bill was endorsed by the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee today to provide \$300,000 per year and additional manpower for DEQ to do the work required in seeking primacy from the EPA.

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